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**Report of the United Nations High Commissioner for
Refugees, questions relating to refugees, returnees and
displaced persons and humanitarian questions**

Assistance to refugees, returnees and displaced persons in Africa (covering the period 1 January 2007-15 June 2008)

Report of the Secretary-General

Summary

The present report is submitted in compliance with General Assembly resolution 62/125 on assistance to refugees, returnees and displaced persons in Africa and draws on information received from a number of United Nations organizations. It updates the information contained in the report of the Secretary-General submitted to the Assembly at its sixty-second session (A/62/316) and contains an overview of regional developments across the continent as well as information on specific areas of inter-agency cooperation. The period covered is 2007 and the first half of 2008.

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I. Introduction

1. Displacement by armed conflict and other situations of violence¹ in Africa² increased during 2007, with the total number of uprooted people growing by approximately 1 million. At the end of 2007, the total population of concern to the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) stood at 15.2 million, with internally displaced persons (IDPs) outnumbering refugees by a wide margin. The estimated 12.7 million IDPs in Africa make up almost half the worldwide total. African nations hosted 2.3 million refugees in 2007, continuing the trend of decreasing numbers observed since 2001.

2. Underlying these broad trends are both the significant progress made in achieving durable solutions and the impact of several new population movements across the continent. During the reporting period, more than 2 million displaced people³ found solutions to their plight. This was largely a result of the consolidation of peace and stability in some countries of origin, but is also due to the generosity of various African States that offered local integration, and of countries elsewhere in the world that provided resettlement opportunities. In 2007, an estimated 300,000 refugees and 1.7 million IDPs made the decisive step of returning home, often after years of exile. Their joy was frequently tempered, however, by the difficulties of reintegrating in communities affected by conflict. Significant progress was made in the local integration of residual refugee groups in Central, Southern and West Africa. For some 19,000 refugees across the continent, third-country resettlement provided the most appropriate long-term solution.

3. At the same time, conflict in the north of the Central African Republic, Chad, North Kivu Province of the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Somalia and the Darfur region of the Sudan caused new displacement within and across international borders and exacerbated already dire humanitarian situations. Providing assistance and protection was challenging, frequently dangerous and yet vital for millions of people⁴ fleeing insecurity, political unrest and persecution.

4. African countries continued to require the bulk of international funding for humanitarian emergencies and operations. Between January 2007 and July 2008, just over 5.5 billion United States dollars (US\$) was received for humanitarian activities in Africa identified in 36 inter-agency appeals of the United Nations and partners. The majority of those appeals were for activities benefiting displaced people. The Central Emergency Response Fund contributed to ensuring a more predictable response to emergencies, including grants for Africa of over \$398 million against global disbursements of \$613 million. In addition, several donors continued to pool humanitarian resources for the Sudan and the Democratic Republic of the Congo, giving the humanitarian coordinators in those countries a

¹ In addition to conflict-related displaced persons, there are significant numbers of persons displaced by natural disasters who receive assistance and protection from Governments with the support of the international community.

² In the present report, Africa refers to sub-Saharan Africa.

³ Statistics on refugees, asylum-seekers and returnees usually refer to UNHCR statistics as of January 2008, unless otherwise specified. Statistics on IDPs and returned IDPs are estimates provided by UNOCHA and the Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre (IDMC) "Global Overview of Trends and Developments in 2007" report. Statistics are provisional and subject to change.

⁴ Displaced persons comprise IDPs, refugees and asylum-seekers.

strategic funding mechanism to ensure early support for critical activities. United Nations entities and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) received significant funding through emergency response funds in the Central African Republic, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Somalia, the Sudan and Zimbabwe.

II. Regional overviews

A. East Africa and the Horn of Africa

5. East Africa and the Horn of Africa were hard hit by conflict and natural disasters, particularly Ethiopia, Kenya, Somalia and the Sudan, resulting in additional population displacements. Overall, the number of refugees in this region increased by 15 per cent in 2007 despite improvements in Southern Sudan that allowed a significant number of refugees and IDPs to return.

The Sudan

6. The Sudan is the scene of the largest humanitarian operation in Africa, including the biggest IDP crisis (5.8 million persons) and refugee repatriation operation. The Sudan was also the largest refugee-producing country in 2007 (523,000 refugees) on the continent.

7. Darfur remained in a state of humanitarian emergency as a result of unabated violence and deteriorating security. New displacement occurred within Darfur and into neighbouring Chad and the Central African Republic. The estimated 4.2 million people living in Darfur have been affected by the conflict, including more than 2.5 million who are displaced. Despite a massive presence of aid agencies, insecurity, including increasing numbers of incidents targeting humanitarian workers, and restrictions on humanitarian access and space impeded efforts to deliver assistance. Although the United Nations-African Union Hybrid Mission in Darfur was in place by the end of 2007, it lacked equipment and sufficient personnel to implement effectively its mandate to protect civilians.

8. Southern Sudan has moved slowly towards recovery following the milestone 2005 peace agreement and the deployment of a peace-support operation. Between 2005 and the end of 2007, some 202,200 refugees went home from neighbouring countries and 1.6 million IDPs returned or settled elsewhere throughout the Sudan. Strong recovery and development-oriented assistance is critical at this juncture to secure the fragile peace and build governmental, social and economic infrastructure needed to sustain returns. Another challenge is the need to address serious political issues ahead of the 2009 elections and the 2011 referendum, including the contested area of Abyei, where recent violent clashes resulted in the displacement of some 50,000 civilians.

9. Although Eastern Sudan remained relatively stable, it suffers from chronic underdevelopment and food insecurity. This region continued to receive asylum-seekers, mainly from Eritrea, Ethiopia and Somalia. More than 15,000 new arrivals have been recorded since early 2007. Livelihood opportunities remain insufficient and living conditions in camps are substandard, particularly in the sanitation sector, where less than 25 per cent of the population has access to latrines.

Somalia

10. Continued conflict in south and central Somalia has caused massive displacement of populations in and around Mogadishu, leaving hundreds of thousands of Somalis in a state of desperate need. In the reporting period, the IDP population rose from 450,000 to approximately 1.1 million people. Humanitarian indicators are at alarming levels as IDPs have very limited and sporadic access to life-sustaining assistance. Only 29 per cent of the population use improved drinking water sources.⁵ Constant fighting between the Transitional Federal Government and the insurgents of the Union of Islamic Courts and Al Shabab, the abduction and killing of humanitarian workers, border closures, piracy along the Somali coast, and inter-clan fighting have rendered the delivery of humanitarian aid almost impossible.

Ethiopia

11. Clashes in the Ogaden region, coupled with drought, floods and food insecurity in southern Ethiopia, triggered the internal displacement of thousands of Ethiopians. International organizations estimate that there are currently some 200,000 conflict-induced IDPs, living mainly in Somali, Oromiya, Gambella and Tigray regional States.

12. Ethiopia continued to host tens of thousands refugees from Eritrea, Somalia and Southern Sudan. New refugee camps were opened to accommodate the growing number of asylum-seekers, including more than 29,200 Somalis and 12,500 Eritreans over the past 18 months, according to Government statistics. Southern Sudanese refugees returned home in significant numbers, with over 35,600 individuals having departed since the repatriation operation started in 2006. Progress on repatriation has allowed the closure of three camps and increased focus on rehabilitation activities in refugee-hosting areas.

Kenya

13. Post-election violence that erupted in late 2007 led to the displacement of between 350,000 and 500,000 people to camps and host communities, especially in the Rift Valley. In addition, some 12,000 Kenyans sought refuge in Uganda. The situation has improved considerably following a power-sharing agreement in February between the Government and the opposition. Since then, almost 280,000 people have spontaneously returned to their homes. The challenge is now to find solutions for those who remain displaced. The vast majority of Kenyans who fled to neighbouring Uganda have so far decided to remain there.

14. With over 265,000 refugees originating mainly from Somalia and Southern Sudan, Kenya remained one of the largest refugee-hosting countries in Africa. The Government's decision in January 2007 to close the Kenya-Somalia border has kept out Somalis in need of international protection. Nevertheless, some 18,000 asylum-seekers managed to cross into Kenya in 2007 and were placed in increasingly crowded refugee camps.

⁵ Millennium Development Goal 7 plans to halve, by 2015, the proportion of people without sustainable access to safe drinking water and basic sanitation.

Uganda

15. Southern Sudanese refugees in Uganda showed strong interest in returning home. Between January and June 2008, some 41,000 Sudanese were assisted to repatriate. Furthermore, a verification exercise in refugee settlements revealed that an additional 60,000 Sudanese refugees had left and most probably repatriated spontaneously. As a result, the number of registered refugees in Uganda dropped from 217,000 in early 2007 to 132,000 in June 2008. Refugees from other countries continued to enjoy asylum in Uganda, which received influxes from the neighbouring Democratic Republic of the Congo in 2007 and from Kenya in early 2008.

16. The consolidation of security, the lifting of restrictions on freedom of movement and ongoing development efforts in northern Uganda allowed over 1.1 million IDPs to begin returning and re-establishing their livelihoods. By March 2008, some 741,000 had returned to their villages of origin and 373,000 had moved to transit areas closer to their places of origin. Approximately 700,000 IDPs remain in camps in Uganda.

B. Central Africa and the Great Lakes region

17. Political stability has remained a distant prospect for the Central Africa and Great Lakes subregions. Deteriorating security in parts of the Central African Republic, Chad and the Democratic Republic of the Congo caused more suffering and displacement of populations already severely affected by poverty and conflict. On a positive note, progress in achieving durable solutions for refugees in the camps in the north-west of the United Republic of Tanzania has led to a decrease in the refugee population from 285,000 to 160,000 in the last 18 months and to the closure of seven camps.

Burundi

18. While clashes between Government forces and rebel groups continued in north-western Burundi, at times limiting humanitarian access, the recent return of the leader of the Forces nationales de libération (FNL) and the start of the cantonment process of FNL troops give hope for further stabilization of the country.

19. Refugees continued to repatriate to Burundi, almost exclusively from the United Republic of Tanzania. Since January 2007, almost 80,000 refugees have gone home, benefiting from additional support in the form of cash grants introduced to facilitate their reintegration. The voluntary repatriation of Burundian refugees who have lived self-sufficiently in settlements in the United Republic of Tanzania since the 1970s started in March 2008.

20. Despite donor support for post-conflict recovery programmes, the reintegration process has remained fragile in Burundi, which ranks among the 10 poorest countries in the world.⁶ Limited access to livelihood opportunities and conflict over the distribution of scarce land, particularly for returnees who had left Burundi in the 1970s, are some of the major challenges.

⁶ United Nations Development Programme, *Human Development Report 2007/2008* (New York, 2007), Human Development Index.

Central African Republic

21. Fighting between Government forces and irregular armed groups, combined with widespread banditry, has severely affected civilians in the north of the Central African Republic, where populations have been subject to human rights abuses, including sexual and gender-based violence, forced recruitment, kidnapping and looting of property. The number of IDPs rose to 197,000 and tens of thousands of civilians sought asylum in neighbouring Chad, Cameroon and the Sudan. The total number of Central African refugees now stands at 104,000.

22. The increased presence of humanitarian actors may have contributed to a decline in rebel and army reprisals against civilians observed since mid-2007. This trend, along with the recent signature of a peace agreement, nurtures hope for the resumption of economic activity and for the return of IDPs and refugees, should insecurity be brought under control.

Chad

23. The situation in eastern Chad has worsened markedly along the volatile border with Darfur where cross-border movements of armed groups, militia clashes, acts of banditry and general impunity affected the safety and security of 250,000 refugees from Darfur, 186,000 Chadian IDPs and the host communities. The presence of armed elements in and around refugee camps and IDP sites, forced recruitment of adults and children, incidents of sexual and gender-based violence, food insecurity, malnutrition and poverty are all pressing humanitarian concerns. Compounding this situation, the depletion of natural resources continued to be a serious source of tension between displaced populations and local communities.

24. Owing to insecurity and violence against humanitarian workers, humanitarian activities had to be suspended several times, jeopardizing the provision of basic assistance and protection. A European Union-led military force was deployed in early 2008 and will work in concert with the United Nations Mission in the Central African Republic and Chad, to improve the protection of civilians, particularly refugees and IDPs, and increase humanitarian space.

25. In southern Chad, a new refugee camp was opened to shelter the civilians fleeing northern Central African Republic. As prospects for voluntary repatriation remained uncertain for the 57,000 Central African refugees, agencies have focused increasingly on improving their self-reliance.

26. An attack by Chadian rebel forces on N'Djamena in February 2008 prompted approximately 30,000 Chadians to flee to Cameroon. Over 4,200 have still not returned.

Democratic Republic of the Congo

27. While the democratic process progressed with the organization of presidential and parliamentary elections and the installation of a new Government in 2007, fighting continued in eastern parts of the country, particularly in North Kivu and certain parts of South Kivu, where serious human rights violations, including sexual violence, affected large numbers of civilians. In addition to triggering population movements towards Burundi, Uganda and Rwanda, insecurity caused the internal displacement of about half a million people in 2007. Congolese IDPs now total 1.3 million. The pattern of IDP movements has changed in North Kivu, with

growing numbers of people seeking safe haven in spontaneous sites or camps managed by humanitarian organizations rather than in host communities where coping mechanisms had been exhausted. Another worrisome development was the attack launched by the Forces démocratiques de libération du Rwanda on Kinyandoni IDP camp in June 2008, which killed and injured many civilians.

28. Tentative steps were taken towards peace in 2008, such as the signature in Goma of a peace agreement between the Government and various rebel groups in the Kivus, and efforts to implement the Amani Plan for the eastern part of the country.

29. In other areas, such as Katanga, South Kivu and Province Orientale, improving security allowed more than 1 million IDPs to return home. Congolese refugees in the United Republic of Tanzania, the Republic of the Congo and Zambia continued to return to areas enjoying relative peace and stability. In total, some 158,700 Congolese refugees have returned home since the repatriation operation started in 2004.

C. Southern Africa

30. Repatriation operations were completed for the Angolans and launched for Congolese refugees in Zambia, contributing to the achievement of durable solutions and reducing the number of refugees in the subregion. Another encouraging trend has been the growing willingness of Governments to consider the possibility of local integration for remaining refugee groups.

31. Zimbabwe slipped deeper into turmoil as the human rights situation worsened in the aftermath of the March 2008 presidential and parliamentary elections. Politically motivated violence resulted in significant new internal displacement, adding to the victims of forced evictions and displaced farm workers who constitute the majority of those displaced previously.

32. As economic, political, social and humanitarian conditions continued to decline, many Zimbabweans were forced to leave the country to survive and support their families, with the number of people fleeing political violence, intimidation and human rights abuses mounting since the elections. Several hundred Zimbabweans sought asylum in neighbouring Botswana, Mozambique and Zambia, but South Africa remained the main destination.

33. In May 2008, South Africa was hit by a wave of unprecedented xenophobic violence targeting Zimbabweans and other foreign nationals, resulting in some 60 deaths and displacing up to 100,000 people. About 25,000 displaced foreign nationals were accommodated at temporary sites where they received physical protection and assistance. By the end of June, the number of people in sites had decreased by almost half.

D. West Africa

34. Overall, West Africa remained relatively stable in 2007, with the consolidation of peace and strengthening of constitutional order in previously war-ravaged countries, such as Liberia and Sierra Leone. In 2007, West Africa had 175,000 refugees — 30 per cent fewer compared to 2006 — owing to successful voluntary

repatriation operations and positive achievements in terms of resettlement to third countries.

35. By the end of the assisted repatriation operation in June 2007, over 158,000 refugees had returned to Liberia. In 2008, repatriation has continued on a case-by-case basis. Unrest in Buduburain refugee camp in Ghana in March and April 2008, however, resulted in the arrest and deportation of 16 Liberians, including 13 registered refugees. Subsequently, UNHCR resumed organized voluntary repatriation to Liberia for refugees wishing to return, and by midyear, some 3,300 Liberians had gone home.

36. As a result of political changes in Mauritania, the voluntary repatriation of some 24,000 Mauritanian refugees started in January 2008, with 4,700 returns from Senegal to date. Likewise, solutions may be at hand for long-staying Mauritanian refugees in Mali. The ongoing voluntary repatriation of Togolese refugees from Ghana and Benin is expected to be concluded later in 2008.

37. In Liberia, despite sustained efforts to facilitate reintegration, many people have returned to areas where recovery is making slow progress. While tackling this challenge, the Government has requested humanitarian agencies to prolong assistance programmes to help bridge the gap between relief and development.

38. In Côte d'Ivoire, the signing of the Ouagadougou Peace Agreement in March 2007 between the Government and the Forces nouvelles improved prospects for stability and the return of refugees and an estimated 700,000 IDPs. According to humanitarian agencies, by the end of May 2008, some 61,000 IDPs had returned to their areas of origin, mainly in western and central Côte d'Ivoire. Despite remarkable progress on a range of issues, social cohesion and economic infrastructure remain fragile.

III. Humanitarian response and inter-agency cooperation

A. United Nations reform

The cluster approach

39. Since 2005, the cluster approach has been implemented to ensure a more predictable and effective humanitarian response, in particular for IDPs. Through the leadership and work of the "global clusters", it has enhanced United Nations and partner engagement with IDPs through training of humanitarian workers and national authorities; technical guidance to field operations; and the development and dissemination of tools, such as the *Handbook for the Protection of Internally Displaced Persons*.⁷ Several global clusters have established rosters of technical experts and cluster coordinators to be deployed quickly to emergencies.

40. The cluster approach is now being implemented in 11 African countries: the Central African Republic, Chad, Côte d'Ivoire, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Ethiopia, Guinea, Kenya, Liberia, Somalia, Uganda and Zimbabwe. Although Burundi, Eritrea and the Sudan have not formally adopted the cluster

⁷ Provisional edition, Inter-Agency Standing Committee, December 2007.

approach, sectoral coordination mechanisms incorporate its key principles of accountability, partnership, predictability and leadership.

41. The focus should now be on moving from strengthened processes to concrete results, and there is evidence that cluster activities have had a positive impact for IDPs. For example, in Liberia, the camp management cluster has supported environmental protection and rehabilitation in 34 former IDP camps; in Côte d'Ivoire, the protection cluster has been supporting legal advice centres where IDPs benefit from legal counselling and help address property issues; and in northern Uganda, the health cluster has helped reduce the crude mortality rates to below emergency level and increase the immunization coverage to over 85 per cent.

42. To improve its interventions, UNHCR conducted five real-time evaluations of IDP operations in Africa. Achievements and gaps identified are being fed into the ongoing global evaluation of the cluster approach led by the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs.

Delivering as One

43. In Africa, the Delivering as One initiative⁸ has been piloted in Cape Verde, Mozambique, Rwanda and the United Republic of Tanzania, and refugees and IDPs have been included in joint United Nations programming in the latter three countries. In the United Republic of Tanzania, for instance, United Nations entities have become more active in refugee-hosting areas, preparing for the transition towards development activities and the local integration of refugees.

United Nations peacebuilding architecture

44. The number of countries in Africa benefiting from the new United Nations peacebuilding architecture, namely the Peacebuilding Commission and the Peacebuilding Fund, has grown from the two original pilot countries (Burundi and Sierra Leone) in 2006 to nine in 2008. At all levels, UNHCR continued to emphasize the importance of sustainable reintegration and cross-border elements in peacebuilding, including voluntary repatriation of refugees and IDPs, as well as the need for solutions for remaining refugees. The Representative of the Secretary-General on the human rights of internally displaced persons has equally ensured that the IDP dimension is taken into account in the activities of the Peacebuilding Commission.

B. Promotion of international protection principles

45. The United Nations continued to provide assistance to States to meet their international obligations to protect refugees, IDPs and others of concern.

Strengthening of national refugee protection

46. African countries have historically demonstrated strong support to international and regional legal instruments related to the protection of refugees, with 43 African States parties to the 1951 Convention relating to the Status of

⁸ The Delivering as One pilot initiative is testing in eight countries how the United Nations system can deliver assistance more efficiently and in a more coordinated way.

Refugees⁹ or the 1967 Protocol thereto¹⁰ and 42 parties to the Convention of the Organization of African Unity governing the specific aspects of refugee problems in Africa.¹¹ However, a number of States have made reservations to those conventions and, although practices are sometimes flexible, these limitations undermine the strength and harmony of the protection regime.

47. Significant advances were made in Burundi, the Central African Republic, Guinea-Bissau and Sierra Leone, where national refugee laws were adopted in 2007. In Kenya, the refugee law adopted in 2006 came into force in May 2007. UNHCR also worked with the Angolan Government on the revision of its asylum law.

48. United Nations entities made progress in strengthening Governments' capacity to assume their primary responsibility for the protection of refugees. In Togo, the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) supported training of staff members of the Togolese High Commissioner for Returnees and Humanitarian Action. The UNHCR Strengthening Protection Capacity Project, implemented in Burundi, Kenya, the United Republic of Tanzania and Zambia, contributed to the development of sustainable national capacities for protection.

49. To improve national refugee status determination capacity, initiatives were implemented in several countries. In partnership with the International Association of Refugee Law Judges, for example, UNHCR undertook a pilot project involving the deployment of a judge to support capacity-building for refugee status determination decision makers in four West African countries.

Mixed migration

50. Mixed population movements across borders, notably from the Horn of Africa towards Yemen, from West Africa towards Europe, and within Africa towards South Africa, posed enormous challenges for humanitarian action and international protection. Among prevention and response measures taken to address the challenges of mixed migratory movements, UNHCR and partners are working with governmental partners in Djibouti, Ethiopia, Puntland and Somaliland to enhance refugee status determination procedures and options available to those recognized as refugees. With better protection and greater access to durable solutions, fewer refugees will feel compelled to risk their lives in search of opportunities across the Gulf of Aden.

Promotion of the human rights of IDPs and operational responses

51. The acceptance, use and national implementation of the Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement have grown since 1998 as a result of continued advocacy, training and sensitization efforts by the Representative of the Secretary-General on the human rights of internally displaced persons, United Nations entities, NGOs, in particular the Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre, civil society groups and Governments. In western Côte d'Ivoire, for example, the Human Rights Division of the United Nations Operation in Côte d'Ivoire (ONUCI) sensitized over 400 representatives of local authorities, local communities, IDPs and NGOs on those Guiding Principles since early 2008.

⁹ United Nations, *Treaty Series*, vol. 189, No. 2545.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, vol. 606, No. 8791.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, vol. 1001, No. 14691.

52. At the subregional level, a major step forward was made in June 2008 with the entry into force of the Pact on Security, Stability and Development in the Great Lakes Region and its Protocols, including the Protocol on Protection and Assistance to Internally Displaced Persons. This Protocol aims at establishing a legal framework for the protection of the internally displaced and requires States parties to incorporate the Guiding Principles into domestic law. At the regional level, the African Union is making progress in drafting a convention for the protection and assistance of internally displaced persons in Africa.

53. Staff deployment schemes were a crucial operational asset in responding to increasingly complex and numerous IDP situations. Such mechanisms included the UNHCR/International Rescue Committee Protection Surge Capacity project and the inter-agency Protection Standby Capacity Project (ProCap). In 2008 to date, ProCap, which is hosted by the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs with the administrative support of the Norwegian Refugee Council, deployed senior protection officers on nine assignments in Africa to various United Nations agencies to support the protection response, mainly in conflict-related IDP situations. ProCap also supported training of personnel in the emergency rosters of NGO standby partners.

Registration and documentation

54. Registration and documentation are essential tools to protect asylum-seekers and refugees by facilitating access to basic rights and services, helping to identify individuals in need of special assistance, and preventing protection abuses such as *refoulement* and forced recruitment.

55. UNHCR provided support and assistance to States to assume responsibility for registration and documentation of asylum-seekers and refugees. In 2007, the Governments of Malawi, Namibia and Zambia have assumed more responsibility in managing registration systems based on technology provided by UNHCR. In Namibia, the Government began issuing identification cards to refugees similar to those issued to nationals.

56. The protection and camp coordination and camp management cluster supported IDP profiling surveys in Chad, Côte d'Ivoire and Somalia and gave Somalia and Uganda technical support in operational data management. The profile obtained of the IDP population was used to provide direct assistance, hone programme strategies and advocate for their protection.

57. The lack of systematic issuance of birth certificates by national authorities to refugee and IDP children remains of concern. Measures were taken to raise awareness of the importance of birth registration and to facilitate access to such documentation for refugee children. Examples included the provision of funds to reduce the cost of birth certificates in Somalia and education campaigns on the importance of acquiring a birth certificate targeting refugees in Ghana and the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

Security of persons of concern

58. In countries plagued by conflict and unrest, such as the Central African Republic, Chad, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, the Sudan and Somalia, insecurity continued to threaten displaced people's lives, put them at risk of further

displacement and limit their access to basic rights and services, including education and food. Despite constant monitoring and efforts to sensitize authorities, armed groups and displaced populations on the importance of maintaining the civilian and humanitarian character of camps, these principles were not always respected. In Chad, for instance, regular incidents of forced and voluntary recruitment by armed elements in refugee camps and IDP sites were a serious problem.

Prevention and response to sexual and gender-based violence

59. United Nations entities and their partners took steps to coordinate their actions to prevent and respond to sexual and gender-based violence, notably through the United Nations Action against Sexual Violence in Conflict joint initiative. In Darfur, much of the work of OHCHR involved documenting cases of gender-based violence against women and girls who had been sexually assaulted by State and non-State actors. In the Congo, UNHCR maintained 51 drop-in centres and conducted awareness sessions for about 3,000 individuals in Loukolela and Betou areas. United Nations entities, including UNICEF, the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) and Human Rights/United Nations Organization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, and their partners reinforced activities to combat sexual and gender-based violence in the east of the Democratic Republic of the Congo, where shocking incidents occurred with impunity. Activities included a major sensitization campaign, reinforced health response and the training of legal officers.

60. The establishment of sexual and gender-based violence standard operating procedures, which ensure that systems are maintained for effective prevention and response, has brought tangible results. In Burundi, 96 per cent of the 300 survivors who reported sexual and gender-based violence in returnee areas received adequate medical, legal and psychosocial support.

61. UNFPA has provided essential life-saving post-rape treatment kits in numerous displacement settings and undertaken training for the clinical management of rape victims in several African countries. Despite these efforts, the problem of sexual and gender-based violence is still widespread in many conflict zones.

Women and child protection

62. Women and children, who represent the majority of displaced populations, have specific protection needs and concerns. Efforts to empower women made some progress through increasing the participation of women in representative committees, notably in Kenya, Rwanda and the United Republic of Tanzania. Overall, the meaningful participation and empowerment of women remains a challenge. Providing sanitary materials is a specific priority, considering its serious impact on women's dignity, security, health, protection and girls' access to education.

63. Forced recruitment of displaced children remained a critical problem in African countries plagued by long-running conflicts, although continued advocacy efforts had a positive impact on the release of child soldiers in various situations. In Uganda, UNICEF and partners reunited over 1,000 formerly abducted children with their families and helped them reintegrate into their communities through basic skills training and income-generating activities.

64. Building on Executive Committee Conclusion No. 107 on children at risk,¹² UNHCR and partners worked to strengthen child protection systems, with a particular focus on unaccompanied children and the engaging of children in participatory assessments aimed at improving programmes for their benefit. In May 2008, UNHCR released Guidelines on the Formal Determination of the Best Interests of the Child, which are part of a comprehensive child-protection system currently being implemented in 18 countries in Africa. Partner agencies, such as UNICEF and NGOs with expertise in child protection, support the process in the field.

Statelessness

65. Though relatively small in numbers compared to refugees and IDPs, statelessness is, nonetheless, a reality in Africa. UNHCR continued to identify stateless populations and people who are unable to establish their nationality. To date, reliable country-level data is available for some 100,000 stateless people, although the actual number on the continent is believed to be significantly higher.

66. During the reporting period, UNHCR provided States with technical advice on nationality, related legislation and its application. In Kenya, UNHCR advocated for measures to resolve the situation of Nubians and other stateless groups. It ensured that the tripartite agreement for the voluntary repatriation of Mauritanian refugees from Senegal included nationality guarantees. In Côte d'Ivoire, with the support of the Norwegian Refugee Council, UNHCR provided information and counselling on documentation, identification, nationality and land and property issues to IDPs and people at risk of statelessness. Sustained advocacy is required to increase the number of States party to the 1954 and 1961 conventions on statelessness (currently standing at 11 and 7 African States, respectively), as well as to improve the implementation of the provisions relating to nationality in other treaties.

C. Ending forced displacement

Solutions to forced displacement

67. Although voluntary repatriation remained the preferred solution for most refugees, 2007 saw the development of comprehensive strategies for several protracted refugee situations. The consolidation of peace and security allowed over 300,000 refugees to return home in 2007, mainly to Angola, Burundi, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Liberia, Mauritania, Southern Sudan and Togo.

68. After a considerable period during which voluntary repatriation was given preference over other solutions for refugees, local integration is experiencing a significant revitalization in Africa. A notable illustration was the comprehensive solutions plan adopted for some 218,000 Burundian refugees in the United Republic of Tanzania who had fled their country¹³ in 1972. In 2007, the Government of the United Republic of Tanzania agreed to offer local integration, including naturalization, to those choosing to remain. Refugees wishing to return home are being assisted to repatriate and reintegrate. The UNHCR strategy calls for the provision of community-based support in refugee-hosting areas, and the

¹² *Official Records of the General Assembly, Sixty-second Session, Supplement No. 12 A (A/62/12/Add.1), chap. III, sect. A.*

mobilization of United Nations partners in the United Republic of Tanzania, as well as other development actors and donors.

69. Positive developments with local integration of refugees were recorded too in Central and West Africa. In Central Africa, encouraging steps were taken in various countries to facilitate the local settlement of refugees from Nigeria, Republic of the Congo and Rwanda. For remaining Liberian and Sierra Leonean refugees who opted not to repatriate, UNHCR is working with the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) and its member States to facilitate the implementation of the ECOWAS Treaty to secure legal possibilities for local integration.

70. Third-country resettlement¹³ of refugees is most successful when used strategically and as a complement to other durable solutions. As a tangible demonstration of international burden sharing, resettlement can help reassure Governments hosting large numbers of refugees, enhance protection space and increase receptivity to other solutions for refugees. Approximately 19,000 refugees comprising 28 nationalities were referred for resettlement in 2007.

71. Securing durable solutions in the form of voluntary, safe and dignified return, local integration or settlement¹⁴ for IDPs remains a challenge, particularly in some countries where political considerations take precedence over the rights of IDPs. In 2007, the Representative of the Secretary-General on the human rights of internally displaced persons developed a Framework for Durable Solutions for Internally Displaced Persons. This tool aided implementation of the Goma peace process in the east of the Democratic Republic of the Congo, as well as of the Protocol on Protection and Assistance to Internally Displaced Persons, adopted at the International Conference on the Great Lakes Region.

72. In 2007, major IDP return movements took place in Southern Sudan, northern Uganda, parts of the Democratic Republic of the Congo and Côte d'Ivoire. Approximately 1.7 million IDPs returned home to those areas. The principal obstacles to resolving IDP situations in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Kenya and Somalia are insecurity; lack of protection; unequal or lack of access to documentation, property restitution or livelihoods; and political participation.

Sustainability of solutions

73. The durability of repatriation and local integration is perhaps the greatest challenge for ending a cycle of forced displacement. UNHCR has continued to promote the early engagement of development actors in post-conflict situations, as IDPs and refugees are reluctant to return to war-ravaged areas where the most basic services, such as education and health, are unavailable and where competition for land and other livelihood opportunities may bring them into conflict with other groups.

74. In the Democratic Republic of the Congo, within the framework of the reintegration and community recovery cluster, UNDP has been implementing six short-term reintegration and recovery projects in areas of IDP and refugee return to address their specific and urgent needs. In Liberia, following an assessment with UNHCR in 2006 on reintegration needs, the International Labour Organization

¹³ Resettlement is the term used to describe permanent third country relocation by refugees.

¹⁴ Settlement is the term used in the context of IDPs to denote establishment by them in another part of the country.

(ILO) carried out a survey of employment opportunities to facilitate the reintegration of returnees, resulting in a project that improved the income of over 200,000 people and combined the efforts of a wide range of national and international stakeholders.

75. Inter-agency collaboration is also crucial in the area of local integration. In West African countries where a legal framework for local integration is in place, UNHCR has engaged key partners, such as UNDP, ILO, UNICEF and the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), to help enhance refugee livelihoods, including through agriculture, education and vocational training. In the United Republic of Tanzania, UNHCR has approached ILO to include refugees from Burundi in the Joint United Nations programme on wealth creation, employment and economic empowerment.

76. Ensuring the sustainability of repatriation and local integration requires the involvement of receiving communities in the design of humanitarian and post-conflict programmes. In Côte d'Ivoire, in addition to monitoring and mediation efforts, The Human Rights Division of ONUCI has funded income-generating activities for communities and returnees. Overall, however, funding for early recovery and sustainability measures remains a challenge.

77. Durable solutions for IDPs and refugees are closely linked to peacebuilding processes. Return may create or exacerbate friction between former displaced persons and communities, and overcoming tensions may require peacebuilding activities, ideally based on integrated strategies for post-conflict recovery. In Kenya, UNDP interventions in areas affected by post-election unrest focus on returning IDPs and the communities and include support to local peacebuilding initiatives. UNHCR promoted consultations with Darfur refugees in Chad in the Darfur-Darfur dialogue, as well as the participation of refugees from the Democratic Republic of the Congo in the Goma peace conference held in January 2008.

D. Delivery of assistance and special needs

78. A favourable protection environment hinges on security from violence and exploitation. But human dignity also requires safeguarding other fundamental rights, including access to adequate shelter, clean water and sanitation, sufficient food, primary health care and education.

Humanitarian response capacity and constraints

79. New displacement crises in the Central African Republic, Chad, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Somalia and the Darfur region of the Sudan necessitated the speedy mobilization of human, logistics and material resources. In 2007, UNHCR and its partners made 113 emergency staff deployments to 11 operations in Africa. Additional refugee and IDP sites were established to accommodate newly displaced persons, notably in Cameroon, Ethiopia, the Democratic Republic of the Congo and southern Chad.

80. Humanitarian workers faced grave threats to their security, resulting sometimes in the temporary evacuation of personnel. Several United Nations staff members and partners lost their lives and many others were hijacked or kidnapped while on duty. In Darfur, between January and June 2008, 8 humanitarian workers

were killed, 117 humanitarian personnel were temporarily abducted and 125 humanitarian vehicles were hijacked. Thirty-six drivers contracted by the World Food Programme (WFP) are still missing. This has had enormous implications on humanitarian operations. Attacks on WFP convoys have seriously delayed the delivery of food aid, resulting in a drop of more than 40 per cent in the level of assistance since May 2008. In neighbouring Chad, insecurity compelled humanitarian organizations to evacuate staff on several occasions and make contingency arrangements to ensure the delivery of assistance.

81. Despite serious security problems and logistical constraints, humanitarian agencies made every effort to deliver assistance and protection to displaced populations. In 2007, WFP food reached over 1.5 million people in Somalia, and UNICEF provided family relief kits to over 240,000 individuals displaced by flooding or conflict in the country. In Chad, insecurity and poor road conditions required complex logistics operations and intricate planning to pre-position food stocks supplied from long distances. Detailed planning allowed WFP to respond effectively to the crisis, particularly in mid-2007 when the numbers of IDPs in need of assistance rose from 50,000 to 150,000.

82. In many operations, costly air transport was necessary to guarantee an effective and timely humanitarian response and to transport personnel who otherwise would not have access. In 2007, as logistics cluster lead, WFP provided air transport services to the humanitarian community in 12 African countries.

Food and nutrition

83. In 2007, WFP assisted 1.53 million refugees, some 900,000 returnees and 6.3 million IDPs in Africa, mainly through general food rations, school feeding and supplementary feeding programmes. In an effort to ensure the efficient use of food aid, United Nations agencies, NGOs and local authorities undertook 11 joint assessment missions and nutrition surveys in 2007.

84. Prioritization of nutrition programmes, additional funding and joint efforts helped to reduce global acute malnutrition rates in refugee operations most affected by the problem, notably in Djibouti, Ethiopia and Kenya. Additional efforts are required, however, to reach the international standard of 5 per cent global acute malnutrition for stable humanitarian situations. In Eastern Sudan, the global acute malnutrition rate reached an alarming 22.7 per cent. High rates of anaemia have also been observed in many operations and will require concerted efforts.

85. Of significant concern is the impact of the current global food crisis on displaced persons, whose livelihood opportunities are too often scarce or non-existent. The Secretary-General's High-Level Task Force on the Global Food Security Crisis, specifically cites the needs of refugees and displaced people in its Comprehensive Framework for Action, which will be adopted later in 2008, and calls for emergency food assistance, nutrition interventions and safety nets to be enhanced to protect their basic needs.

Health

86. More strategic resource allocation and reinforced inter-agency cooperation among health partners helped improve the quality and coverage of care provided to the displaced. Specific examples include the number of countries meeting the ratio

of camp-based refugees per primary health-care facility which, according to provisional 2007 UNHCR indicators, has improved from 42 per cent in 2006 to 61 per cent in 2007. Malaria and reproductive health indicators improved significantly in several refugee camps. In camps in Ethiopia, the rate of births attended by skilled personnel increased from 14 to 90 per cent between 2006 and 2007, with no recorded maternal deaths.

87. Inter-agency efforts have helped to enhance epidemic preparedness and response activities. In Chad, the World Health Organization (WHO) public health team has worked with UNHCR, UNICEF and health partners to deliver emergency support to IDPs, refugees and local population for disease and nutritional surveillance, early warning and outbreak response systems. Through that collaborative support, health partners have detected and controlled 14 disease outbreaks since 2005. Inter-agency collaboration has also helped organize health service delivery for IDPs and local communities in the Sudan, Somalia and Uganda and for returnees in Burundi.

88. Notwithstanding these improvements, massive resources are still required to make quality health services available to displaced persons in Africa, where life expectancy at birth is still the lowest in the world.

HIV and AIDS

89. Needs remain enormous in Africa, the continent most affected by HIV and AIDS, with 22.5 million people living with the virus and an estimated 11.4 million children orphaned by AIDS, according to the Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS (UNAIDS).

90. Agencies conducted multisectoral assessments for IDPs in the Congo, Côte d'Ivoire and the Democratic Republic of the Congo, resulting in stronger and more comprehensive HIV programmes for IDPs. United Nations entities also worked closely on HIV risk and vulnerabilities, focusing on transactional sex work, alcohol and substance abuse and sexual violence. Rape survivors in almost 75 per cent of refugee camps in Africa now have access to post-exposure prophylaxis when reporting within 72 hours to the appropriate health facility.

91. Campaigns for the inclusion of displaced people in national HIV plans and policies registered gains especially in Southern and West Africa, where most refugees now have the same access as the local population to the national HIV programmes for prevention, treatment and care, including antiretroviral treatments.

Education

92. All children, including displaced children, should be able to enjoy the long-term benefits of education. Education is a child's basic right and an essential tool of protection against exploitation, abuse and forced recruitment.

93. In southern Chad, mass campaigns involving parents and refugee leaders resulted in a 17 per cent increase in enrolment rates at the primary level. In Southern Sudan the enrolment of children in primary school increased by 400,000 pupils in 2007 to reach 1.2 million children, including returned IDPs and refugees, as a result of a "Go to School" campaign. UNICEF, UNHCR and WFP, together with the Japan International Cooperation Agency and the Government of Southern Sudan, also

designed programmes to train and reintegrate returnee teachers to improve the quality of education in return areas.

94. Participatory assessments highlighted problems of exploitation and abuse in some school environments. To redress this, United Nations entities and NGOs launched a Safe Learning Environment Initiative, which is currently being piloted in Malawi, Namibia and Rwanda.

95. Targeted interventions were made to improve refugee girls' enrolment and retention at school, for example by increasing the number of female teachers. Those efforts have improved the situation in Dadaab refugee camps in Kenya, where the number of girls who passed the final examinations at primary level rose by 51 per cent in 2007. However, overall progress was insufficient to redress the dropout rates for girls, particularly at the secondary level.

Livelihood opportunities

96. While refugees can be an important productive resource, local populations and authorities too often view them as an economic threat. Eleven States in Africa have made reservations to article 17 on wage-earning of the 1951 Refugee Convention, thus reflecting the sensitivity on this issue in a context of relative scarce work opportunities. Withdrawing these legal limitations would help refugees improve their daily life, develop self-sufficiency and reduce dependency on humanitarian aid. This goal gained importance at a time when humanitarian aid costs, particularly fuel and food, are on the increase.

97. Initiatives are under way to improve the livelihoods of displaced persons and their host communities, such as the establishment of woodlots, forests and agro-forestry farms in Kenya, the Sudan and Uganda. Inter-agency cooperation enabled humanitarian agencies to use their limited resources judiciously and improve services for beneficiaries. In Ghana, a programme developed by UNHCR, the United Nations Industrial Development Organization and FAO will enhance the self-reliance of camp-based refugees and host communities.

E. Partnerships with non-United Nations entities

98. Close partnerships with international and local NGOs remain vital in ensuring that the basic needs of forcibly displaced people are met. Agencies have been actively involved in the Global Humanitarian Platform, which brings United Nations and non-United Nations humanitarian organizations together to identify means of improving humanitarian response through strengthened collaboration at the global and field levels.

99. United Nations entities, the African Union and subregional organizations developed targeted activities for displaced people, enhancing their strategic partnership in practical areas. In addition to the reinforcement of protection of displaced persons and the promotion of durable solutions, the main areas of cooperation involved peacebuilding, post-conflict reconstruction and mixed migration. Examples include: United Nations technical advice to the African Union during development of the draft convention on internally displaced persons in Africa; active United Nations engagement in preparation of the first African Union Special Summit of Heads of State and Government on Refugees, Returnees and

Internally Displaced Persons in Africa; and the signature of an agreement in West Africa between UNHCR, ECOWAS, and the Governments of Liberia, Nigeria and Sierra Leone to facilitate access and the transition to residence status for refugees opting to remain in their country of asylum.

IV. Conclusions and recommendations

100. While certain post-conflict situations have stabilized, allowing a significant number of displaced persons to return home and restart their lives, millions more Africans are still forcibly displaced. The upcoming African Union Special Summit will provide a unique opportunity for Heads of State and Government to adopt new approaches to resolving these situations of forced displacement in Africa. Solutions are within reach and the concluding paragraphs of the present report present a number of recommendations.

101. African States, which remain the primary bearers of the responsibility for the protection of and assistance to victims of forced displacement on the continent, should redouble their efforts to develop and implement comprehensive durable solutions strategies, including expanding opportunities for local integration for refugees.

102. States, the African Union, subregional organizations and the international community should enhance their collaboration and interventions to ensure that peace will be sustainable in countries emerging from conflict. The recovery process and bridging the gap between humanitarian relief and longer-term development remain real and extremely problematic challenges to this goal. In particular, the international donor community must abide by its commitment to increase its post-conflict and development aid to Africa.

103. African States, the African Union, subregional organizations and the international community should integrate the protection and assistance needs of displaced persons in peace agreements, post-conflict transition frameworks, development plans and poverty reduction strategies.

104. Pending the realization of solutions, refugees and internally displaced persons frequently live in appalling and degrading conditions in camps or settlements, scattered within impoverished host communities or struggling to survive in urban environments. Cognizant of Africa's exemplary history of generosity towards victims of forced displacement, it is recommended that the African Union conclude the draft convention for the protection and assistance of internally displaced persons in Africa. Once adopted, that convention will be a groundbreaking achievement as the first international treaty focusing on IDPs.

105. Knowing that essentially, two out of three refugees depend on international food aid, African host countries are encouraged to create an enabling environment for refugees to become self-reliant. This entails removing counterproductive restrictions, starting with reservations States have made to key provisions in the 1951 Convention and 1967 Protocol, including those in respect of freedom of movement, work and education rights of refugees.

106. Displacement exposes people to greater risk of violence and exploitation, including through attacks on refugee and IDP sites, forced recruitment and

sexual and gender-based violence, particularly when used as a weapon of war. States must discharge their fundamental responsibility to provide effective protection for refugees and IDPs, which includes maintaining the humanitarian and civilian character of displacement sites. Of particular importance is the need to end impunity for acts of sexual violence, including rape.

107. Humanitarian workers are at times faced with grave security problems and limited access to displaced populations. States and other parties to conflict must ensure safe, timely and unhindered access to displaced populations. Troop-contributing countries and donors must provide the necessary resources and capacities to peacekeeping operations that have been mandated to protect civilians, including displaced people.